

The Virginia Company

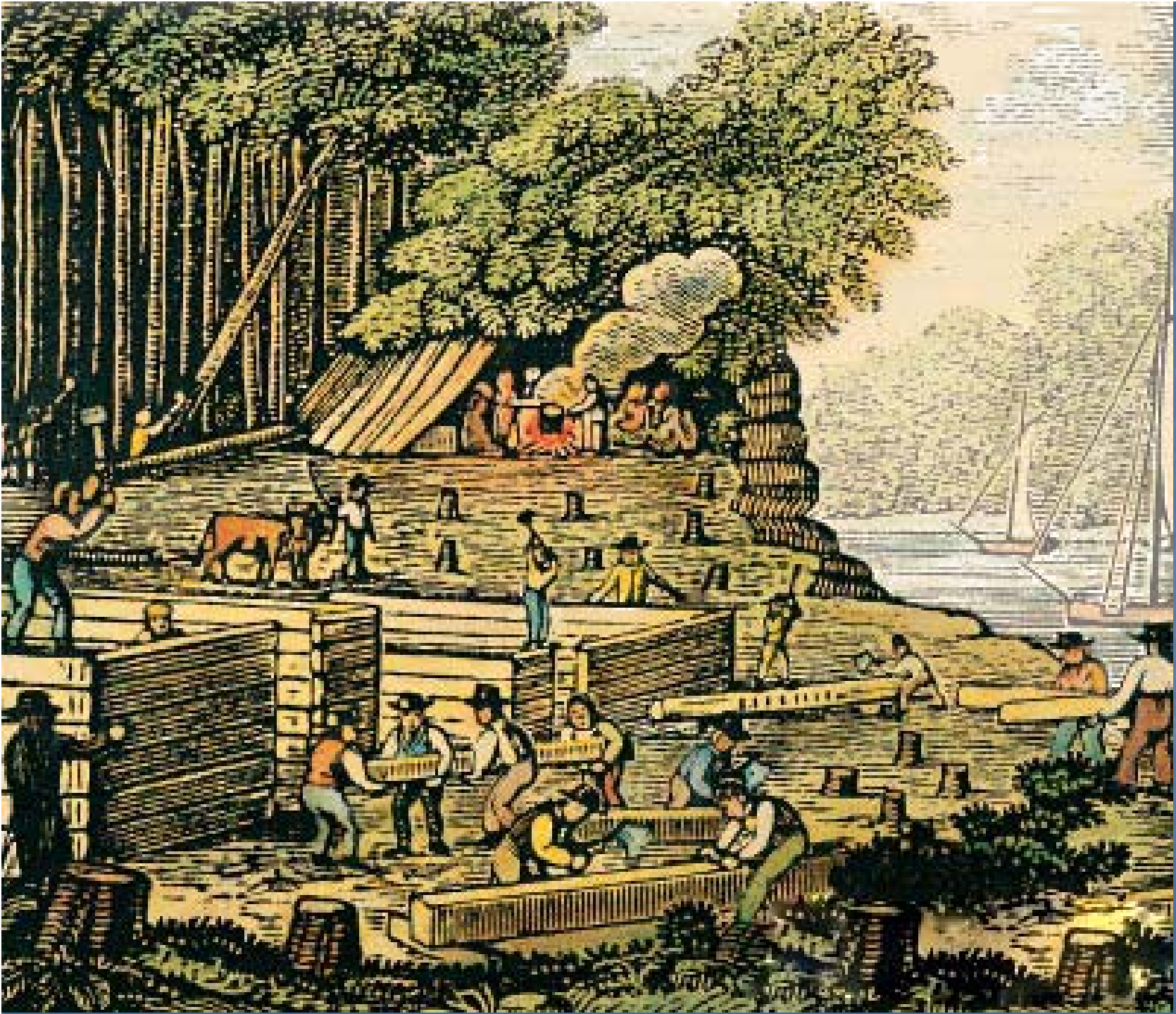
Jamestown Settlement
Forts

Early English Settlements, 1585–1607



GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER Interpreting Maps

- 1. Location** Which colony was located northeast of Jamestown? How many miles northeast was it?
- 2. Human-Environment Interaction** Why did the colonists settle near the coast?



Early Colonial Settlement - woodcut

The settlers at Jamestown, Virginia, built a fort with three walls rather than four to make it easier to defend.

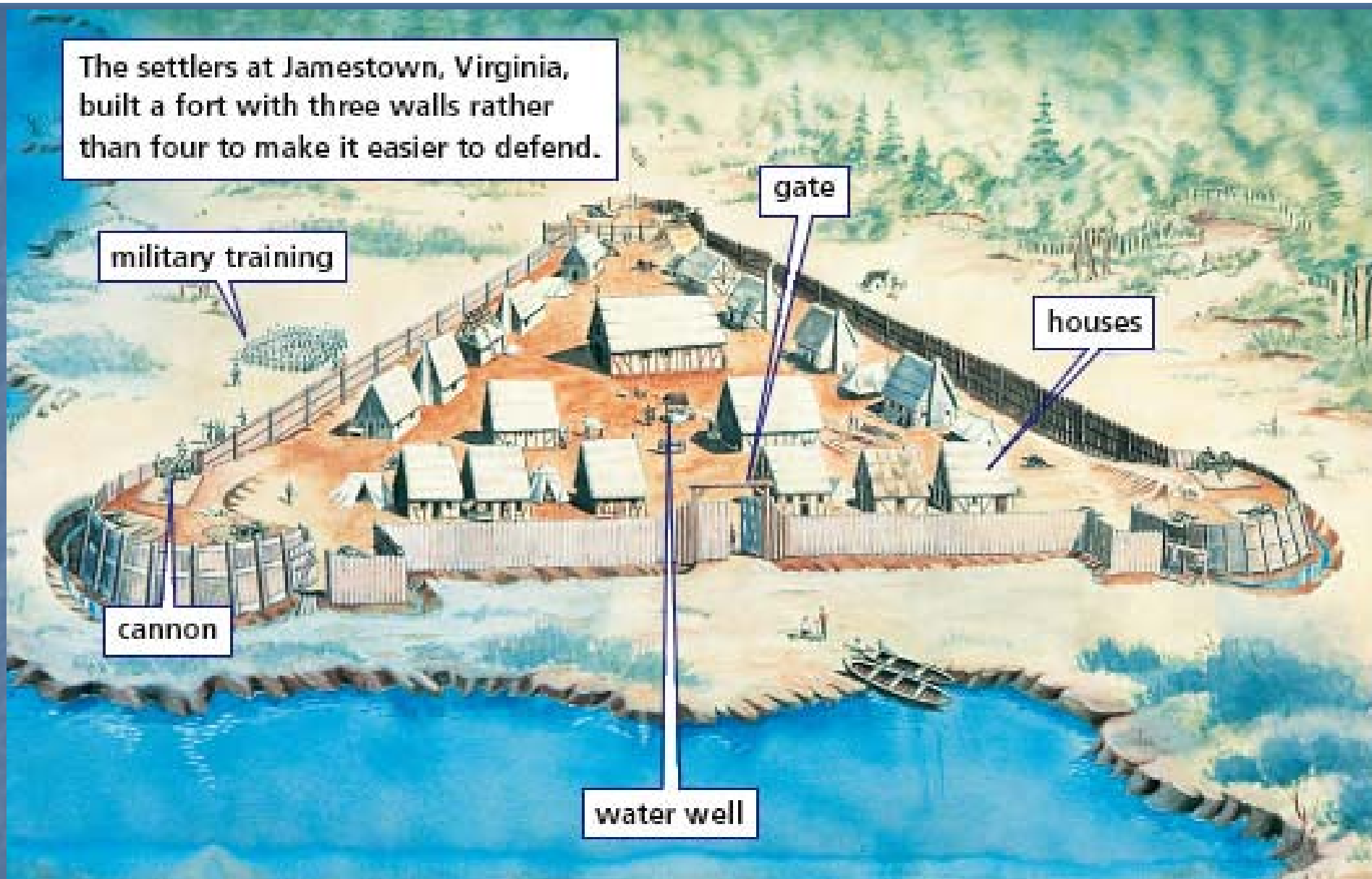
military training

gate

houses

cannon

water well



Fort James – Virginia



<http://www.apva.org/finding/index.html>

Excavation since 1994 has uncovered hundreds of thousands of artifacts dating to the first half of the 17th century. Nearly half of the objects date to the first years of English settlement (1607-1610). The site of James Fort was not washed into the river as most people believed for the past 200 years. We have uncovered over 250 feet of two palisade wall lines, the east cannon projection (bulwark), three filled in cellars, and a building, all part of the triangular James Fort.

THE JAMES RIVER



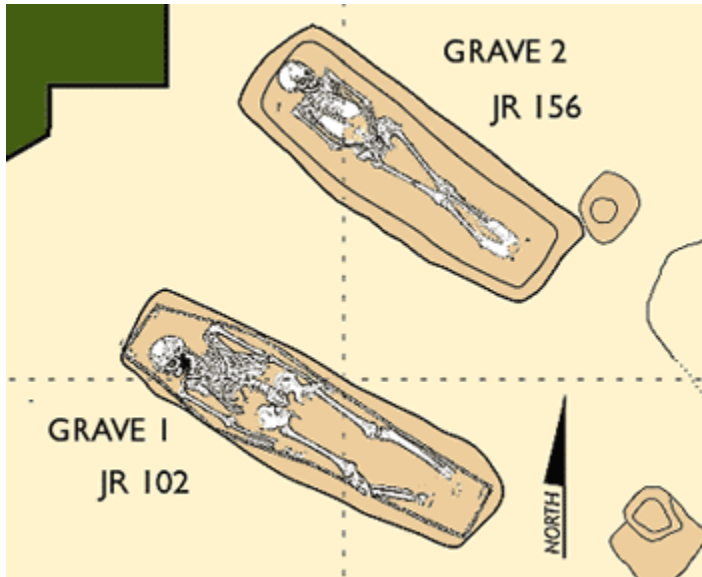
The excavation sites

- 1 = well
- 2 = Burials
- 3 = Barracks?
- 4 = S. Palisade
- 5 = E. Bulwarks
- 6 = Powder Magazine
- 7 = John White's
- 8 = "out" building
- 9 = Church
- 10 = N. Church
- 11 = N. Bulwark
- 12 = Pocahontas Statue



1. Well

2. Burials



Drawing showing the proximity of the two burials excavated by *Jamestown Rediscovery*.

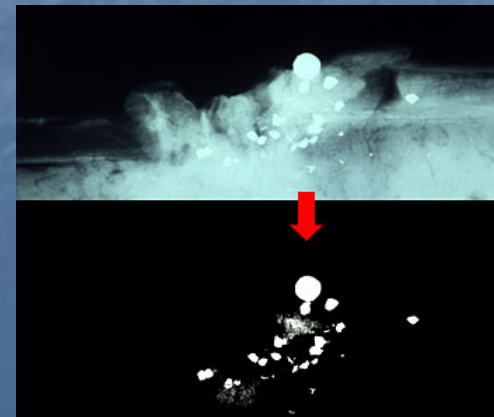
[Burial 1](#) -- JR 102C A young man with a bullet shattered leg.

[Burial 2](#) -- JR 156C An older woman with surviving coffin wood.



The skeleton was that of a white male, only 18-20 years of age. He was about 5'9" and slightly built, but with a fairly strong upper body. His teeth and bones show no signs of early childhood diseases. His right leg is broken and twisted below the knee, where the young man was shot. [A lead musket ball and smaller lead shot](#) remain on and within the bone. This wound, and the resulting loss of blood was the likely cause of death. There appears to have been no attempt to remove the lead, or to set the leg, and no healing took place in the bone prior to death. There is no evidence indicating additional wounds to the body.

The young man was buried in a six-sided, flat lidded coffin, which was shown by soil stains from the decayed wood, and by the rusted iron nails used to build it. The fact that he was buried in a coffin may suggest that he had a gentleman's status.





3. Barracks

...Structure 160, helped identify the likely parent tradition of this type of architecture. Known as “Mud and Stud” this style of building was used in and around the East Lindsay region in the county of Lincolnshire along England’s East Coast....The pairing of the earthen walls and the wooden internal frame creates a solid wall on which to support the roofing timbers and thatch. There are existing 16th century examples of such structures still standing in Lincolnshire complete with the clay chimneys.

Documentary accounts from the early years at the fort describe the buildings in similar terms. John Smith description of the 1607 church as “set upon cratchets, covered with rafts, sedge, and earth.... While three years later William Strachey described the houses as “at first pargeted and plastered with bitumen. Both the reference to earth as well as bitumen indicate mud walled structures and Strachey’s use of the term pargeted indicates a white washed exterior, both typical of mud and stud construction.

After the building went down or at least part of it, the cellar expanded apparently to acquire clay material for plastering (daubing) the walls of a building. These pits were probably used for mixing the daub as well, with the central shaft supplying ground water. In the central shaft we found the impressions of [marsh grasses](#) that would have been used to mix with the clay as a binder. The most spectacular thing about the cellar/pit was the large number of artifacts found in the soil used to back fill it.. Over 44,000 objects were found in the sealed contexts of the pit. This material is the oldest extensive collection of English artifacts found in America. A complete [Cabasset helmet](#) (the first helmet found at Jamestown and only the fifth in Virginia) was found in the bottom of one of the sub pits. A large proportion of the artifacts found was military or industrial in nature.

The artifacts from Pit I also illustrate trade relations with the Powhatan people and early industrial trials at James Fort.



5. East Bulwark

The east bulwark or bastion of James Fort was located in December of 1995. The first indication was a curved palisade line similar to the south curtain wall. This palisade forms a quarter of a circle. The western most part of the palisade was destroyed by the construction of the Pocahontas monument in the early 1920's.

Ten feet outside the bulwark palisade and following the same curve is the bulwark trench. This trench was the result of digging soil to pile up along the palisade thus creating a greater barrier than a palisade alone. Regardless, the trench was open during the early James Fort period.



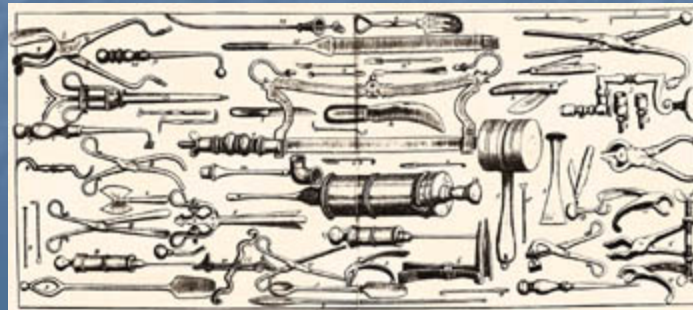
4. South Palisade

All that remains of the palisade fence at James Fort are stains in the soil. In the spring of 1607 the fort walls were constructed of logs set upright into a narrow slot trench. The areas where the slot trench disturbed the natural clay subsoil showed up as a dark stain in the clay.



6. Powder Magazine

The artifacts found here indicate a fill date sometime in the early James Fort period. Broken [ceramic vessels](#), military hardware, tobacco pipes, coins, [tokens](#), and a [medical implement](#), all dating around 1610 were found in the sealed contexts of the pit. How this feature relates to the bulwark and the chronology of the fort construction overall is still being researched. However, it is possible that it served as a place to store powder near the bulwark guns but deep enough to prohibit accidental explosions.





7. John White's

The middle of the 1620's saw James Fort decline in importance as Jamestown came into it's own as the capitol of the Virginia colony. The [change from military outpost to a more stable community](#) is reflected in the archaeological record, especially the architecture. Throughout the second quarter of the 17th century the use of more permanent building materials became more common as the town grew out of the fort. Brick makers had come to Virginia as early as 1608 but it wasn't until the 1620's that brick was used extensively in the construction of buildings.

The site of John White's House and/or Warehouse was located just east of James Fort. It represents the transition from the wood and mud barracks type buildings of James Fort to the brick structures that sprang up around the "New Town" to the east after the Fort ceased to exist. It is a large structure by 17th-century standards, 46 x 30 feet. The foundations, which are only partially excavated to date, are built of brick and stone.



8. Out Building

Excavations of an early extension to the core James Fort revealed an L-shaped hole located at the end of a 50 foot palisade wall trench extending east of the triangular Fort. Complete excavation of the feature discovered that the hole was actually a cellar built in two stages under a building supported by up-right posts in the ground. The cellar has steps descending from one corner, had once been partially walled with timber, had a fire place area, and two barrels buried in and below the floor to drain it. This could have been used as a jail or even the dungeon where John Smith once held a Powhatan Indian captive.



9. The Church

The First and Second Churches--Captain John Smith reported that the first church services were held outdoors "under an awning (which was an old saile)" fastened to three or four trees. Shortly thereafter the settlers built the first church inside the fort. Smith said it was "a homely thing like a barn set on crachetts, covered with rafts, sedge and earth." This church burned in January, 1608....

The Third Church--In 1617-1619... was a wooden church built on a foundation of cobblestones one foot wide capped by a wall one brick thick. You can see these foundations under the glass on the floor of the present building. The First Assembly was held in the third church.

The Fourth Church--In January, 1639... was slightly larger than the third church and was built around it. It was still unfinished in November, 1647 when efforts were made to complete it. After it was finished the church tower was added. The tower is the only seventeenth-century building still standing at Jamestown. It is one of the oldest English-built structures in the United States....

The Present Church--The present Memorial Church building was constructed in 1906 by the National Society, Colonial Dames of America just outside the foundations of the earlier churches. It was dedicated May 13, 1907.



12. Statue of Pocahontas

Pocahontas was the favorite daughter of Powhatan, who ruled the Powhatan Confederacy. She was born about 1595, probably... 16 miles from Jamestown. Captain John Smith believed she had saved his life twice during the colony's first years. In 1608-1609 she was a frequent and welcome visitor to Jamestown, often bringing gifts of food from her father.

...In April, 1613 she was captured by the English while she was living on the Potomac River and was brought to Jamestown as a hostage. She soon converted to Christianity and was baptized. Her marriage to John Rolfe in April, 1614 helped to establish peaceful relations between the Indians and the English. In 1616 she visited England with her husband and infant son, Thomas, and was presented to the Royal Court. While returning to Virginia she died on March 21, 1617 and was buried in St. George's Church in Gravesend, England. Today many Americans claim descent from her through her son and granddaughter. The statue, by William Ordway Partridge, was erected in 1922.